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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to describe the personal and professional changes that occurred when three young children with Down Syndrome were mainstreamed into "regular" kindergarten classes in Northeast Tennessee. During the 1989-1990 school year, data were collected using participant observation and in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and principals in three schools. Data were collapsed into four general categories of results, focusing on changes in personal and professional confidence, changes in teaching approaches and strategies, changes in perspectives on integration, and changes in personal beliefs and attitudes. Results indicated that all adults involved in the mainstreaming process viewed the experience positively. All parties gained a great deal of confidence both in themselves and in each other. All those concerned developed a respect for the potential that children with Down Syndrome bring to the regular classroom. (20 references) (JDD)

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Personal and Professional Change Associated With The Integration of Children With Down Syndrome Into the Public Schools

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Abstract

Across the country teachers and administrators are making attempts to "mainstream" mentally handicapped youngsters into regular classrooms. Little is known, however, about the effect of mainstreaming on the adults involved in the mainstreaming process. The purpose of this study was to describe the personal and professional changes that occurred when three young children with Down Syndrome were mainstreamed into "regular" kindergarten classes in Northeast Tennessee.

During the 1989-1990 school year data were collected using participant observation and indepth interviewing techniques in three schools. Interviews were conducted over the entire school year. The data were analyzed inductively and thematic responses were generated. The analysis focused not only on the content of these changes, but also the process; i.e., how each of these groups of stakeholders went about determining what they needed to know or understand, how they selected strategies and resources, how they changed and the impact of those changes.

The results provided a rich description of the changes experienced by parents, teachers and principals. Teachers experienced the greatest amount of change and learned, to a great extent, through collaborative efforts. Principals were not involved in learning to the same extent. Common perspectives are identified and implications drawn for future practice.

Personal and Professional Change Associated With

The Integration of Children With Down Syndrome Into the Public Schools

Since the enactment of Public Law 94-142 in 1975, school systems across this country have been forced to look at the educational services that are being provided to students with disabilities. One of the special provisions in the law is the "least-restrictive environment" clause, which supports the idea that children with disabilities be educated in their home school and be educated in an environment that is as "normal" as possible. This LRE criterion has lead to the practice of mainstreaming or integration of children with disabilities into the regular classroom (Bellamy, 1987).

While all children with disabilities have been affected under this LRE clause, students with mental handicaps represent a group of children that have received much attention. Many individuals, including classroom teachers, principals and parents, have argued against mainstreaming children with mental handicaps because, they argue, it is not in the best interest of the handicapped child or because it severely affects the rest of the class (Ohanian, 1990; Gallent, 1981). Research also has shown that many pre-service (e.g.; Curtis, 1985; Warger & Trippe, 1982) and inservice teachers (Larrivee, 1981) have strong reservations about the mainstreaming process and their ability to work with a disabled child in the regular classroom. Despite

this often vocal opposition to mainstreaming mentally handicapped children, Westling (1989) recently noted that across the country, many school systems are making attempts to integrate or "mainstream" mentally handicapped youngsters into the regular classroom environment. This practice is based on the principle of normalization and the goal of helping mentally handicapped individuals become important and valued members of society. Normalization is based on the belief that mentally handicapped individuals should learn in an integrated educational environment starting in the early years, find jobs in the competitive labor market and live independently in the community with other disabled and nondisabled citizens (Zigler & Hall, 1986).

In recent years, a great deal of public attention has focused on the integration of individuals with the particular disability known as Down Syndrome into the mainstream of life. Down Syndrome is a genetic abnormality which occurs in approximately 1 in every 800 to 1000 births and is the most frequent cause of mental retardation in this country (Patterson, et. al., 1987). In particular, there has been a growing interest in the integration of children with Down Syndrome into the regular school setting and several investigations have highlighted the unique needs that emerge as these children are integrated into the regular classroom. Much of the research over the past ten years has utilized case study methodology to look at the impact of integration (e.g.; Forest, 1990; Rietveld, 1988;

Allen, 1987; Bruni, 1982; Centre for Studies on Integration in Education, 1983; Cooke, Heron, Heward & Test, 1982; Smith-Warren, 1980). A recent longitudinal research study has also identified positive academic and cognitive developments that occurred for a group of integrated students with Down Syndrome, as compared to a group of students with Down Syndrome that were not integrated (Casey, Jones, Kugler & Watkins, 1988). The mainstreaming of children with Down Syndrome has perhaps been brought into even sharper focus for the American public with the running of the television show "Life Goes On", which stars Christopher Burke, a young man who has Down Syndrome. Research on mainstreaming children with disabilities and in particular, those with Down Syndrome, has shown that integrated learning experiences can be effective. Many questions remain unanswered, however, about the total impact of mainstreaming in a school. Little is also known about the change that the mainstreaming process creates in the lives of those most closely associated with the mainstreaming process; i.e., the parents of the mainstreamed child, the teacher(s) of the child and the principal in the school in which the integration occurs. The purpose of this study was to describe the integration of three young children with Down Syndrome, as seen through the eyes of the parents, teachers and principals, into the regular kindergarten in three schools in Northeast Tennessee. Specifically, the study focused on the personal and professional changes that occurred in these adults

as they planned for their first mainstreaming experience, watched the kindergarten year unfold and reflected back on the experience at the end of the year.

Methods

Since the purpose of this study was to describe the personal and professional changes that occurred among parents, teachers and principals involved with the mainstreaming of the three young children with Down Syndrome, standard fieldwork methods and other methods of qualitative inquiry were utilized to collect and analyze the data, as suggested by Patton (1990). Data collection over the year-long period involved extensive participant observation of the classrooms, participation in M-team meetings, interviews with parents, teachers and principals and a review of documents relevant to each case.

Selection of Cases

Three different children with Down Syndrome were selected for study. The selection process was purposeful. Using the terminology of Patton (1990), the critical case sampling process was used since one purpose of the study was to examine instances where integration was occurring in the Northeast Tennessee region, where integration of children with Down Syndrome was still a practice not often encountered at the early elementary school level. The children were selected as cases for the study through contacts with a regional support group for families of children with Down Syndrome. Each of the parents of these

children were contacted about the possibility of their child being part of a year-long study and each was enthusiastic about the fact that someone was going to be working and observing in the classroom over the school year. Once the parents had given approval the superintendents, special education supervisors, principals and teachers were also contacted and permission was obtained. The parents, teachers and special education supervisors were particularly enthusiastic about the study since an agreement was made that the researchers would also serve as instructional assistants in the classroom as teachers' aides. In each case, the mainstreaming of a child with Down Syndrome was a first time experience for each of the teachers and parents, as no child with this disability had ever been mainstreamed into regular classes in any of the three school systems involved.

The three schools systems were all located in the mountainous area of Northeast Tennessee. All of the students were in county school systems, as opposed to more urban centers, although all of the schools were located within 10 miles of larger cities. The three schools systems were all located in counties that were in close proximity to one another. Each of the schools was an elementary school.

Heather, one of the children with Down Syndrome, attended a large elementary school with an enrollment of approximately 740 students. This large attractive school with a circular design

housed grades K-4 and was located about one mile from Heather's home. The school was located on the outskirts of the small historic little town in which Heather lived. The socioeconomic status of the majority of students at the school would not be considered high. There were other children mainstreamed at this school who had other types of physical disabilities and three years before there had been a Comprehensive Development Class (CDC) at this school, although it had been moved to another school in the system. Mr. Clark, the principal at the school had just been moved to the school from another school in the system and was not the principal who had met with Heather's M-team the previous spring. Mr. Clark had many years of experience as an administrator in the system and was nearing retirement age. Heather's teacher was a woman in her early forties who had been teaching kindergarten for the past thirteen years. This teacher had no children of her own. She was very interested in working with children with disabilities. In the previous three years she had taught several children with severe physical disabilities and was quite proud of her accomplishments. The teacher had never, however, worked with a child with Down Syndrome. The parents and Supervisor for Special Education had "hand-picked" this teacher to work with Heather during the spring prior to entering kindergarten. This teacher had no teacher's aide during the school year, although two student teachers did come into the classroom for short periods of time.

Another of the children, Randy, lived in a small rural community snuggled up next to a beautiful mountain range in the Southern Appalachian Highlands area of Northeast Tennessee. The elementary school housed 580 students grades K-8. The majority of the students in the school came from families that would not be considered affluent, with many parents maintaining industrial or agricultural occupations. The older, but well-maintained school was located near the center of this small rural town about one mile from Randy's home. The principal of the school was Mr. Smith, a principal with thirteen years of administrative experience. Several children with disabilities had previously been mainstreamed at this school, although Randy was the first to be mainstreamed who had Down Syndrome. There was a CDC located in this school. The CDC was located in a part of the building that was separate from the "regular" children. Randy's teacher was in her early forties and had been teaching kindergarten for the previous ten years, although she indicated a preference for teaching third grade. She had no training in special education, other than one course in her undergraduate years. Her only experience with mainstreaming was a young boy she described as being "legally blind". In the spring of the previous school year, this teacher knew that she would be having Randy in her class. It is important to note that a full-time aide was hired to work in Randy's classroom, specifically in response to his anticipated needs.

The third child, Donna, attended a more affluent school that was located near a large industrial center in a different county. As a result, this particular school had a greater mix of students from different socioeconomic backgrounds. The immaculate new elementary school was organized as a series of grade-level pods. The entire school housed 534 students in grades K-5. The principal of this school was an administrator with nearly 20 years of experience in the system. There was a CDC housed within this school. One unique aspect of this particular school was the fact that each kindergarten classroom was furnished with a full-time teacher's aide. Donna represented the first child with Down Syndrome to be mainstreamed at this school. Donna's teacher was a woman in her early forties who learned about Donna's placement in her class the week school started. The teacher had no prior experience with mainstreaming a child with Down Syndrome into the classroom.

Each of the three children had different backgrounds which led them into the mainstreaming environment. Heather was seven years old as she entered Kindergarten in the Fall, 1989. She had been in an early intervention program since she was an infant and had been integrated into regular preschool classes and a regular kindergarten at East Tennessee State University prior to entering the public school kindergarten in her community. Heather came from a middle class background. She has one sister who is three years younger. Her mother is a certified elementary school

teacher who substitute teaches on an occasional basis. Her father is a self-employed craftsman.

Randy entered kindergarten at age six and had previously been in a CDC at the school. Prior to that time Randy received instruction through the Head Start Program. Randy also participated in a special speech and language program that was offered in the school district during the summer. Randy has a sister that is three years his junior. His father is a self-employed construction worker and his mother was not working outside of the home during the kindergarten year.

Donna entered kindergarten for the first time at age six during the 1988-89 school year. After a month of school, however, the staff felt that she was not ready for kindergarten and she was enrolled in a CDC at another school in the system. Donna was age seven as she began the 1989-90 school year in kindergarten for the second time. Donna's parents both work and she has an older brother who is thirteen.

Data Collection

A number of methods were utilized to collect information on the changes that occurred over the course of the school year at these three schools. The primary methods were participant observations, long interviews and the analysis of school-related documents.

Observations

Three researchers began the observational process prior to

the start of school in August, 1989. These participant observers were one professor from the university who made the initial contacts for the study and two advanced graduate students. The three researchers spent approximately 6-8 hours per week at each of the schools, with one individual assigned to each school. Researchers took an active role in the classroom and essentially served as instructional assistants. This amounted to approximately 200 hours of observational time per child over the school year. In January, one of the graduate students left the university and those duties were assumed by the second graduate student, who began making observations at both of the schools. Observations were made in virtually all of the settings associated with the kindergarten experience; e.g., observations were made in the lunch room, gym, playground, music, art and resource classes, on the school bus and on field trips. The researchers kept in close contact, conducting weekly meetings in which observational data were shared, working hypotheses were formulated, debated and initial propositions emerged.

Interviews

Numerous interviews, both formal and informal, were conducted with parents and professional personnel associated with the school system. For the purpose of this analysis, only interviews with parents, principals and regular classroom teachers were utilized, along with observational notes, to assess the changes in perceptions, attitudes and behaviors experienced

by those who participated in the mainstreaming experience. Guidelines suggested by McCracken (1988) were followed in the formal interviews. Initial interviews focused on obtaining information on principal and teacher professional background, their knowledge about Down Syndrome, feelings of parents, teachers and principals about mainstreaming and expectations for the child with Down Syndrome. Subsequent interviews focused on the actual process of parenting, teaching and administering in the school. After the school year was over, interviews were held to allow the participants to reflect back on their experience. In addition to formal interviews, short interviews were often held through brief and informal conversations with parents, teachers and administrators.

Document Analysis

A variety of documents were examined over the course of the year. These documents consisted primarily of the papers and projects of the children, existing studies on the mainstreaming process and the characteristics of children with Down Syndrome, test results and student records. These documents extended the researchers' understanding of the social and educational milieu and aided in the formulation of working hypotheses.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the analysis was to generate categories that described personal and professional changes that occurred in the lives of the parents, teachers and principals as a result of the

mainstreaming process. This analysis process occurred in two phases. Initially, as field notes began to accumulate researchers began to identify patterns of responses from parents, teachers and principals. These early notes contained examples of feelings and beliefs about the mainstreaming process, as well as fears and expectations held by teachers, parents and principals. These data really represented the background against which change was be assessed. These preliminary data guided subsequent efforts to gather information. The formal analysis was initiated after the school year was over. Researchers worked independently in reviewing field notes, interview transcripts and documents. Data were analyzed according to the time of the year in which it was collected, paying particular attention to the changes that occurred during the school year.

As categories of change emerged from the individual analysis, the researchers conferred, retaining those categories that resulted from consensus through a process of observer triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An effort was also made to identify these categories across multiple sources of data through methodological triangulation procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Negative cases were also sought in the data that would identify information that was inconsistent with the categorizations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These strategies of triangulation and negative case analysis were employed to assure the credibility of the descriptions of personal and professional changes that

occurred. As a means of establishing the validity of the data, many excerpts from the data record are included as direct quotations and descriptions of classroom, administrative and parenting practices. All are actual data, reorganized and presented so that they demonstrate the logic behind the interpretations and assertions that were made by the researchers.

Results of the Study

The analysis revealed a number of categorical responses that were seen both in the observations and in the interview data. These were collapsed into the four general categories listed below and then serially discussed in the pages that follow.

Category One: Changes In Personal and Professional Confidence
Category Two: Changes In Teaching Approaches and Strategies
Category Three: Changing Perspectives on Integration
Category Four: Changes in Personal Beliefs and Attitudes

Changes in Personal and Professional Confidence

Perhaps the most significant areas of change resulting from the integration of the children with Down Syndrome into the regular classrooms, was the change that occurred in the levels of personal and professional confidence of teachers and parents. Early in the school year, there was a great deal of apprehension about whether the mainstreaming would work. In all schools, both teachers and parents were very worried about the fact that mainstreaming might not be the best for the child. In a discussion that took place early in the school year, Randy's

teacher revealed her lack of confidence by noting:

> I was apprehensive about having him in my class...I've had no training in special education--that bothered me. The special education [teacher] that has had Randy for a number of years took a year's leave so I didn't have anybody to go and talk to about what he can and can not do.

This initial lack of confidence was very evident at one of the early tension filled M-team meetings for Heather held in May prior to the upcoming school year. In that M-team meeting it was evident that the public school personnel were concerned that Heather would not get the kind of support that she had the year before. The teacher expressed her apprehension this way:

> I believe that we do have to give her a chance, but she has been in a warm, loving, supportive environment. We have 28 kids in the class and no aides in Heather's new school. When I leave Heather I may not get back to her to help her with her work. See, I don't know anything about Down Syndrome. One of the women at the child study center said to me don't worry about it, don't worry about it, don't run off this week and read everything you can about it. But I just don't know anything about them. I don't know what she is going to be able to do. I have no idea what she can do..and I am real skills oriented.

The principal also echoed this sentiment when he remarked that:

> We're not only willing to give her a chance, we want to give her a great chance and we don't want her to fail. What we don't want to do is erode what you all have already done for her.

Early in the year, all three teachers expressed tneir feelings of inadequacy by indicating that they really had no idea what to expect from the children with Down Syndrome, since they had never been trained in that area. For example, Randy's teacher noted that:

> Even academically, I don't know what his limitations are. I've had no training in special education and I don't know if he doesn't do this because he can't or because of some disability or if he's not doing it just to be defiant...I just have a big question mark in my mind "Can he do this ? Is he able to ?" If we are mainstreaming then I feel the normal classroom teacher needs to be instructed more in what the abilities of the mentally retarded are.

Parents also had initial fears as the school year approached. After a very lengthy M-team meeting Heather's noted that she had never felt so apprehensive about mainstreaming as she had when the principal and teacher began expressing their concerns about having Heather in the classroom. She noted that "I had never felt that apprehensive before..I felt that they had all changed their tune".

The comments hint at the initial fear on the part of the principals and particularly teachers, who felt that they would not be able to provide the kind of support that was necessary for the children. As the year progressed, however, it became obvious that the teachers were eager to share in the accomplishments of the children with Down Syndrome. For example, one day after arriving to at the school and walking out to the playground where the children were playing, the teacher came running over to the researcher and exclaimed:

> I have been working all year to try and get her to hang from the monkey bars and she has had this big fear thing about them or if she just wants me to stand there with her and coddle and all of that--but now she does it--just like that. That was a big deal to me. I thought that she ought to be able to hang on the monkey bars, she wasn't doing it and then one day she was. I thought that she would never be able to add--I thought it would be a while before she could

> add two numbers. Now you can give her a whole page--well 5 or 6 problems, and she does them independently. She has gotten to where she can take a line of writing and copy it.

As the school-year progressed there were numerous references in the field notes to the teachers' growing confidence in their ability to understand the children with Down Syndrome and respond to those needs accordingly in the classroom. This sense of pride and confidence is stated clearly in the following exchange:

> I am thrilled that she has learned to add, I'm thrilled that she has learned to write, and I'm thrilled that her listening comprehension is as good as it is and it makes me feel good when she comes up to me after we've had a story and talks about what was in that story.

This change in confidence came about as a result of many information exchanges over the course of the school-year. The teachers were very often asking the researchers for advice and information about Down Syndrome and information was shared in that way. Several other events contributed to the development of confidence about working with the children. In Randy's school, confidence was generated as Randy's teachers and resource personnel began to work collaboratively and set aside blocks of time to share information on his progress. There also seemed to be a great deal more confidence in the integration process when additional assistance was in the room. Randy's teacher was much more comfortable when the aide was assigned to her room. Heather's teacher was perhaps most enthusiastic when the student teachers were assigned to her.

All three of the teachers were invited to attend a local

support group meeting for parents of children who had Down Syndrome. All three attended the meeting. Later one of the teachers commented on the fact that the experience was one of the most powerful educational experiences they had ever encountered and had left the meeting with a whole new view of the handicapped child. Another of the teachers reacted to the support group experience in this way:

> It was an eye opener and for reasons I can't really explain except that there were so many parents there and they were so ordinary and they all have these children who need my help and the help from all the other teachers who were there. They look like regular people and talk like regular people and they become and they are real people and it makes their children more real and their problems more real and I guess if anything it made me realize that what I do has an impact on the lives of children.

Heather's teacher developed a much different understanding of Heather and what it meant to have a child with Down Syndrome as a result of "taking her to town" on a Saturday afternoon. This event turned out to be a very significant one for her as she saw what is was like to be the parent of a child with Down Syndrome. According to the teacher:

> When I took Heather to see Joe Scruggs last Saturday, people looked at us and they didn't know that Heather was not mine and it was really interesting. It was sort of like a role switch with me. I'm not a parent but I can remember being in situations where I would see a parent with a handicapped child and think--isn't that a shame. That person really looks like a nice parent and this type of thing. I'm sure that maybe that's what they were thinking of as they saw Heather and me together.

These kind of experiences lead to a much deeper understanding of the children and boosted their confidence by the end of the school year. This was a confidence builder both in their own teaching abilities and in the mainstreaming process itself. One of the teachers out it this way:

> I feel real good about what happened with her last year. And that is a real sense of satisfaction to me. And it gives me more confidence to go on and make decisions on my own, you know. I might not have been so willing to try a new approach to language had I not gained a little bit of confidence from working with Heather. It made me feel like I was probably a better teacher than I thought I was. You know, I didn't give myself, not giving myself such a hard time over wondering if I am doing the right thing.

Parents also reflected a new sense of confidence as a result of this mainstreaming experience. While parents began the year with a strong sense insecurity, by the end of the year their spirits were very high and full of optimism. One of the parents highlighted this shift in confidence level when she noted that:

> At the beginning of the year I was skeptical, I wasn't really sure. Although she had done well in preschool, I knew that public school was going to be different because there would be more kids, there would be more expectations of her. But she did fine. We had to make some changes here and there, but no more than any other child would have had to have made. I think it's only going to get better. I mean, it's only going to grow as her education continues....I think that with the right program and the right attitude, it can work all the way through.

Parents and teachers, both, found that their initial feelings of insecurity and anxiety were replaced by a sense of hope and confidence that the integration process was successful and that they were an integral part of that process.

Changes In Teaching Approaches and Strategies

The observation of teaching over the course of the school year also highlighted the changes that occurred in the professional practice of teachers as a result of the mainstreaming experience. Heather's teacher provided one very clear example of how this transformation in teaching style occurred as a result of the integration process. Heather's teacher had indicated early in the year that she was apprehensive about the mainstreaming, particularly with a child with a mental disability. This apprehension was due to the strong emphasis in the system on basic skills which is driven to a great extent by the standardized testing at the end of each year. The fear of standardized testing loomed large in the minds of these teachers. Early in the year the teacher expressed her feelings this way:

> You are aware that, uh, there are a couple of different philosophies on how to teach kindergarten. There is, you know, for lack of a better term there are developmental people, like the child study people. And then there are people that are more skills oriented..which I am. Basically, that is not my philosophy, but in the kindergartens in this county we are expected to teach reading, teach math, teach writing and that kind of thing. Since we have had a change in principals I may be a little freer to return to the developmental approach. I used to use this approach until the county became so skills oriented, and then what has been happening recently, we have been faced with standardized testing, standardized testing of kindergarten children. An what is happening is that the results are sent in, they are listed teacher by teacher, they are xeroxed and they are passed around to all of the other teachers. And so, you know, it makes it difficult to teach a kindergartner any other way but according to the test...This is a concern to me. It is very much a concern to me. If I am going to have my test scores compared with

> other people, then any teacher would want their scores way up there at the top.

As the year progressed this teacher became less and less concerned about the standardized testing and more interested in learning to teach using the whole language approach, initially as a way of helping Heather. Whole language became a very significant learning project for this teacher, who confessed that she was really a "developmentalist" who had been forced to conform to the system way of doing things. Classroom activities became more diversified and the teacher began spending more time on activities designed to promote individual development. During the middle of the year a real shift in thinking began to occur as she contemplated de-emphasizing the county-wide workbook series.

> If we abandon that program, for something that might work better for her, like a whole language approach, I think it would also work better for other children. You saw Susie today and what she was doing. I mean, that's basically the beginning of a whole language approach to reading. They begin to write down what they want written down and then they begin to, you know, pick up and write their own words and spell their own words, and, you know, it makes reading real to them. And if I could work on a program like that, it wouldn't matter so much that Heather was not able to keep up. Heather could work on her level and do her stuff that's meaningful to her.

Classroom activities began to become more multi-sensory and the teacher became much more relaxed in the classroom. In a sense the integration had become an opportunity for this teacher to get back to a basic educational teaching philosophy which was comfortable to her, but which had been suppressed by the educational requirements of the state. This learning came about

through reading all she could get her hands on regarding whole language. She had approached the principal and members of the county-wide staff for learning assistance but to no avail. Her learning was initiated by a desire to help the students learn something in a more meaningful way. By the end of the school year students were engaged in a number of activities that reflected a whole language approach. In reflecting back a year later on the impact the integrated experience had on her professional practice this teacher noted a real sense of liberation and no longer felt the burden of the standardized tests:

> I am probably the expert in the school now on whole language. I think the experience with integration has shown me that children can learn in a variety of ways and that it's okay to put away the workbook for awhile and teach children in a way that might be more appropriate for them to learn. Phonetics was such a big deal with Heather. I have come to the conclusion that children do not have to read phonetically, that there are lots of other ways for them to read...[with the new approach] I see basic skills happening and probably more successfully than I did any other way. And I probably wouldn't have had the courage to even try that, had it not been for Heather's success at sight reading last year.

Much of the change that occurred in teaching strategies were not as radical as the year-long change exhibited by Heather's teacher. Many of these changes, however, occurred as teachers reflected on the day-to-day events in the classroom and responded to those events. This process was similar to Schon's (1984) concept of reflection-in-action, as teacher's encountered a problematic situation, considered past experience and designed a

strategy to address the situation. An example of this reflective process can be seen in the response of Randy's teacher to his disruptive behavior in the classroom. As a result of some disruptive behaviors that Randy had been exhibiting, his teacher had suggested during an informal discussion that one of Randy's problems, one of the reasons for his disruptive activity, was that she felt he just couldn't sit still for a long period of time. She made the observation that even "normal" children in the kindergarten get plenty of breaks and are not usually required to sit in any one place for more than an hour. As she considered Randy's schedule, she noted that he was spending considerably more time in sit-down activities, because even his resource activities, whether it was speech therapy, language, other resource and vision activities all involved sitting down. They occurred at times when the other children in the classroom were doing something more active. For example, when the other children were involved in several different activities at learning center or gym time, Randy was usually in one of his resource activities, so he missed out on the active events that the other children were involved in.

The teacher attributed some of this disruptive activity to his lack of activity and not a generally defiant attitude. In response to these reflections on how resource times were scheduled and the importance of nonacademic time, the teacher shifted Randy's schedule to allow him to attend gym class and she

provided him more time for free play.

Change occurred not only in the strategies used by teachers, but also in the way at least one of the principals viewed the importance of home/school relationships in making integration successful. Many of the informal discussions in and around school highlighted the importance of effective home/school communication. According to one principal, he specifically did not change:

> But with the school system I believe it did. I think mainstreaming itself has caused us to put a little more endeavor into making contact, constant contact [with the parents]. That is mainly accomplished here through the teacher.

Another unintended or unanticipated change that affected the teaching approach or schedule occurred when Randy's teacher noted that she was actually a week ahead of where she normally was in the lesson plans. This was attributed to the fact that she had an instructional assistant in the room helping her and having a smaller than normal class size. This change ran counter to what was and arguement against mainstreaming heard at the beginning of the school year; i.e.; because it would "hold up the rest of the kids and keep them from pushing on as quickly as if they would be able to if he wasn't in the room".

Changing Perspectives on Integration

Personal definitions of mainstreaming changed over the course of the school year. This change was perhaps more noticeable among parents and teachers. For example, beginning

with the initial meeting of Heather's M-team there was a definite difference in the way the integration experience was viewed by parents, teachers and principal. In that meeting, Heather's mother and her former teachers and therapists suggested that Heather should be integrated into the classroom without additional classroom support. Heather's parents also felt very strongly early on that no special provisions be made for her. A great deal of the discomfort or tension existing in the initial M-team meeting revolved around this difference. After that first meeting, Heather's mother stated that:

> I know where I think they are coming from, and I think I understand that she [the teacher] is apprehensive, but I don't want an aide in the classroom. Let's wait and see if she needs an aide or not. If it is an aide that is not there all of the time, then that is O.K., but I don't want someone to be with Heather all of the time.

Later in the year, the perceptions of the parents had changed, as a result of watching the Heather's teacher try and work with 25 children in the same class. They expressed their evolving view this way:

> Our position is that all kindergarten teachers should have an aide. They have those kids and those kids are not ready for structured activity all of the time with that teacher. Kids that age have to do things, you know, and they have to do creative things and they have special skills and all that stuff, and it takes more than one person to do all of those creative things that they need to do...we don't feel that Heather should be used as the leverage to get an aide because that is a different kind of aide. That's an aide for Heather. That will come out of special education funds, it is suppose to be used only for her and not anything else. And that type of aide we don't want.

Toward the end of the year Heather's mother expressed the further evolution in her thinking about the aide issue as follows:

> I think an aide would have been great for the room. I think it would have been great to start with. I just didn't like the idea of the aide being brought in specifically for Heather..because I think she has done O.K. without one. Maybe she would have learned more with an aide..but I think she may need an aide more next year. I think probably the thing that got me upset this year was the very first M-team when everybody came in and said we are going to have an aide, or that is the impression I got, "because we are going to have Heather in our classroom"..and they did not know what Heather could do. Maybe I am wrong, but next year, she might need an aide. She might really need an aide.

These excerpts from the record provide a clear change in the parent's thinking about the needs that her child had in the classroom and also reflect a wearing down of an initial fear that her child would somehow be treated as special. Once Heather had demonstrated that she could succeed in the regular classroom, the parents were much less apprehensive and more open to the possibility that assistance might be necessary in the future.

There were also major changes in the way the parents viewed the mainstreaming experience over the course of the school year. Some parents who were initially very apprehensive changed their views, with regards to not only their own child or not only Down Syndrome, but to the wider group of children with disabilities. In reflecting back on the school year, Donna's mother expressed this change in perspective as follows:

> Donna is learning with regular children, maybe a little bit slower in some of the things, but in other things, but in other things she is up-to-par. So, it has changed my feelings that it can work and I would expect to see more mainstreaming done, including any type handicap.

While all of the parents described the a more positive view toward the integration experience, some became more much more active than others in promoting integration. Heather's mother suggested that the success of her mainstreaming experience had

> made me more of an advocate. I want other people to do it. It really bothers me when I hear other parents say "Oh, they won't let her go to that school. My child can't go to that school, and she can't be with her friends or her peers." And that can be a problem because you can't push your ideas on other people, but it makes me want to say "You would really like it if your child was in with other kids. It would make you feel like a regular mom."

One principal indicated that the entire process has changed the way in which he viewed the mainstreaming process. This principal indicated that:

> The whole process has made me more aware of the need to mainstream....Just the need to be mainstreaming conscious. I have always been aware of it in writing and [agree with it] philosophically, but to actually see it work, it has worked other times but I haven't really noticed it, its just that this was such a concentrated effort this time to make it work.

This same principal, however, noted that the change was more in terms of his awareness, since he has always been a supportive of the mainstreaming process. He said:

> I'm real into the fact that the public school is the place to do this. Because it is a society, it is a small micro-society. In general this is what everybody is going to be doing as far as living with other people in this world. This is just part of the world.

The integration experience brought about change in other ways as well. For example, one of the principals indicated that when the new middle school opened up in the coming year:

> I'm putting CDC back with all the regular classrooms. My plans at this point are to move the CDC back with the regular classrooms, because right now it is separated out in its own pod. I'm going to move it back there so there will be a CDC with the regular classrooms. That way, they will to lunch together, they will mingle together, they will go to special programs together, there will be more mainstreaming than there ever has been here before.

The principals also changed their views on the potential of mainstreaming. Their initial reservations were followed by a deeper appreciation for the varied benefits of successful integration. One principal hinted at an element of surprise in looking back at the outcomes of the process:

> Well, I sort of expected, being fairly limited with Down Syndrome, I sort of expected a lot of withdrawal on his part and a lot of hesitation on other people's parts. I was wrong. He was open minded about it. The students were open minded. The instructors were open-minded. So we put them together out of necessity or whatever but it worked. The social aspect of it did anyway. Those people who were around him are much better people for having gone through it.

Although the teachers were generally receptive to the concept of mainstreaming prior to the 1989-90 school year, significant changes also occurred in their view, with all three of the teachers becoming much more vocal in support of the concept. One of the teachers responded to her year in this way:

> I guess with a positive experience I gained a lot of reinforcement that this can be done in the kindergarten and it can be successful. Of course there are a lot of elements

> that go together that make it a success. But I feel like we did have a successful year and I gained a positive attitude and would encourage it in other situations. And I had no background or experience with that. I came from "not knowing" to "trying it" to "it worked". Just going through it helped me realize, sure this is a good thing. I am sure that it is good for the child. It did not affect my class negatively at all, but positively. She gave qualities to our class that I think we wouldn't have gained if we hadn't had her. She was such a sensitive and loving child and she spread those characteristics through the class.

This same teacher became an advocate in her own right when it came time for the child to enter into the first grade and was very instrumental in convincing a reluctant principal that first grade placement would be in the best interests of the child. This advocacy role was also seen in the case of Heather's teacher who relayed a story about a luncheon meeting held with several friends who were also teachers. These teachers had been suggesting that mainstreaming was an ideal that was not practical during instructional time and expressed strong opinions that mainstreaming was not appropriate. Heather's teacher then revealed the very significant change in her orientation when she related her response to those other teachers. She said;

> And I said to them, "What if you had a child with Down Syndrome ?" And I said "And you know that children that are young, a lot of what they know is through modeling. Do you want them modeling, you know what you want them modeling ? Do you want them to model 5 and 6 year olds, or do you want them all placed in a, you know, a room with other children that are just like them ?" And I think that I convinced them. But I, you know, had I not had Heather, I wouldn't believe that way. Not truly, not truly, truly believe that way..[but now] I do truly believe that. I am convinced that it works to mainstream children with Down Syndrome.

Perhaps the most telling evidence of the change that has occurred in the life of Heather's teacher is that fact that she volunteered to switch schools and work with another kindergartner with Down Syndrome who is being mainstreamed in the 1990-1991 school year.

Changes in Personal Beliefs and Attitudes

Parents and teachers alike reported experiencing significant change in their own basic beliefs and attitudes. These represented very significant emotional changes that altered the way in which these individuals viewed their own role as parent or teacher. One teacher summed up her change in this way:

> I think that having Heather last year sort of, sort of renewed my dedication to what I do, and its sort of like, you know, you go for a long time in your profession and nothing new might happen to you. You might not have, I call them new thoughts, something that in some way or another changes your life, and I think that the experience with Heather last year has changed my professional life in the way I look at it now, and you know, I don't think I would have looked into this whole language thing had it not been for Heather--and that's been a real satisfying search for me is to find out about it and to read about it and to see if it might work with what I do.

The intensity of the relationship between teacher and child can be felt in a quote from one of the teachers who was concerned about the placement of Donna in the 1990-91 first grade class. She described the very personal relationship as follows:

> I think I am between administrator and parent. I think I am feeling her (child's) needs as a parent too. You know, as you work with her, you begin to love her and care for her and protect her and so I am wanting to do this now. I get real involved and it really bothers me to see this child is shafted and not given all of the advantages that maybe she

> could gain if she was just let to continue with a normal group. I just want her to be given a chance, even though it takes much longer for her to gain all those skills than the average child in her grade level--she is learning slowly.

Parents also experienced change in their basic attitude and beliefs about the future of their children. For these parents, the mainstreaming experience represented a hope for something that they had not previously thought to exist. It represented a chance for their families to look to the future with great optimism and zeal. One of the parents expressed her enthusiasm this way:

> You think now that ten years ago these kids weren't able to do anything, go to school, and then after twenty-one they stayed home and somebody had to care for them. I think the laws are changing and that gives me hope that things will change and that she will grow up to have a better life than , say, twenty years ago. I can see her learning and doing well enough to have a job like teacher's aide, which she would dearly love, as she loves children. Who is to say what she will be like as she gets older. I can see her working in a flower shop, because she loves flowers. She talks about working at McDonald's because she loves to eat there. I can see her role-playing that position in her play. She talks about being a teacher, that is her goal. Maybe now that is a little far-fetched, but who knows...Who is to say. I am sure going to keep an open mind and hope in my heart.

One of the principals noted that there were changes that occurred in the way he actually conducted himself in the school that were directed related to his experience with mainstreaming. These changes related to his increasing level of empathy for disabled children and lack of patience for nondisabled children who were not putting forth good effort.

> Just knowing that you are needed around some of these children, I have children that I get very upset with that

> have everything in the world going for them and they are just too lazy to do it. And if they walked in my shoes for an hour and see how hard some children are back there trying just to write their name, it keeps you, one foot on the ground at all the time, it keeps me humble. I makes me want to continue to be after the one's that have a lot more going for them and aren't putting forth near the effort. I mean I have a lot less patience for them than I used to. I don't know if that is a counterproductive statement of not, but I...I'm actually more curt with them sometimes because I see other people in there just trying as hard as they can just to get by. And it keeps me very humble. I don't feel that I'm so significant that I just can't go over and put my arm around them and talk to them for a second, of course that is probably what I was hired to do. It has kept me humble when I get to thinking that I have hung the moon today because I have more people than anybody in the county, or that our teachers are doing such a great job that I can feel a little bit cocky today, I better step back and realize that there are people up here making it just by constant effort all the time.

Early in the school year there was a great deal of uncertainty about mainstreaming a child with Down Syndrome, particularly on the part of teachers. As is the case with many adults, the teachers knew very little about Down Syndrome to start the year and knew little about the educational capabilities of children with this particular disability. Over the year there were changes in attitude toward individuals with this particular disability. Two of the teachers mentioned that their perceptions and attitudes about children with Down Syndrome were formed by watching other children who had been in CDC classes. On several occasions, these teachers sought out information on Down Syndrome from the researchers. In the early interviews with teachers it was evident that teachers were relying on these "impressions" as they tried to comes to grips with the question of how they might

work with the child with Down Syndrome in the classroom. For example, at the first M-team meeting one of the teachers was talking about her experiences in visiting the child's previous school and after a brief observational session commented on what seemed to be a short attention span:

> These may be characteristics of a Downs child. Let me talk about how she will do. There will be a lot of things that we teach that she will never be able to do. She may never be able to do some things. I don't know if she will ever read or not. These is going to be a point at which she will get left behind.

Near the end of the year this teacher commented on Heather's abilities in this way:

> I now realize that Heather is more like other children than she is different from them. And I also feel that feel that the other children also realized that even though Heather is handicapped, she is more like them than different. She has many of the the same needs needs that they do at this age and she is capable of doing the same things that they do.

At the completion of the year this same teacher was reflecting on her thoughts and feeling about children with Down Syndrome and their proper place in our educational system. She responded as follows:

> I learned a lot about Down Syndrome. First of all I learned that people with Down Syndrome can do a lot of things. I really didn't, really didn't know anything. I thought they were all retarded, severly retarded. And I wondered, you know about whether it would work, how it would work. I felt real limited in what I knew--and I still don't know alot, other than what experience has taught me. I think that is has convinced me that you can teach children with Down Syndrome. You can teach them the same things that you teach the other children.

As the school year progressed, old impressions and stereotypes began to be replaced by new expectations in the

classroom. Teachers began to have some answers for those questions that went unanswered early on. There also seemed to be a great deal of excitement whenever one of these early preconceptions came crashing down as the result of some classroom experience. One teacher expressed her changing expectations as follows:

> Randy, performed, in my opinion, performed better than expected, better than I ever expected. He acted well and showed a loving attitude as well as he received one. Most of the time...He performed better than expected..mostly socially, in my opinion. I did not pay a lot of attention to academics. I'm sure that it had its ups and downs but I really observed social acceptance on his parts as well as other peoples parts.

The television series "Life Goes On" was also very important in changing the early perceptions of the teachers about people with Down Syndrome. On several occasions in the middle of the school year the teacher would initiate a discussion of the character Corky Thatcher in the movie and what he had done on the show in the previous week. This finding was evidence of the powerful impact this medium can have on the learning of teachers. One teacher described her fascination with the program this way:

> Initially I watched the show. I was amazed at what he could do, you know. But I'll tell you what that television show did. It made me realize that Heather could be where he is or any other child that I had or that I was in contact with that had Down Syndrome, could be doing what he is doing when they get to be his age and that when they look back on their lives, I want to be an important part of that.

Discussion

The results of this study have highlighted some of the significant changes made by parents, teachers and principals as they integrated young children into the public school kindergarten for the first time in three schools in Northeast Tennessee. The changes identified in the study were often intense and resulted in a radical restructuring in the way the individual saw his or her role in the school. In many cases, belief systems were changed dramatically. Across all cases, several common themes gleaned from this study have implications for educational practice out in the schools. First, all those involved in the mainstreaming process viewed the experience positively and felt that it is a process that should be continued when appropriate. They all felt that the process worked. Second, all parties gained a great deal of confidence as a result of the experience; a confidence both in themselves and in each other. This resulted in greater sharing and collaboration among teachers and resource persons in the school. Third, the experience seemed to bring about a commitment to the future education of children with Down Syndrome and children with other disabilities, at least in these three school systems. All those concerned developed a new respect for the potential that children with Down Syndrome bring to the regular classroom, an understanding that was not present as the students began the 1989-90 school year. As a final note, it became apparent that

the act of researching the integration process helped to bring about positive outcomes in these schools. In reflecting on this, one of the principals noted that:

> Focused attention, with you [the participant observer], actually being here made it more noticeable because you were so helpful in so many different ways. The teacher, just the talk of it, the study, you know, sort of like a general electric study in a way. The whole idea of knowing that you are being studied might make a difference I think.

Perhaps a final recommendation of the study would be that all attempts at integration be given the same type of focused attention and support, since this appears to be such a powerful force in bringing about positive professional and personal change. These results highlight the many important, yet sometimes subtle, changes associated with the integration process and may lead to a deeper understanding of the factors that lead to the successful mainstreaming of children with Down Syndrome into the public schools.

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